

## **How Do Trauma and Identity Unfold Through Dialogue? A Psychoanalytic and Linguistic Analysis of Netflix's Slasher Solstice**

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# How Do Trauma and Identity Unfold Through Dialogue? A Psychoanalytic and Linguistic Analysis of Netflix's Slasher Solstice

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## Abstract

This study investigates the intricate relationship between trauma, desire, and identity as conveyed through language patterns in the Netflix series *Slasher: Solstice*. By applying both psychoanalytic and linguistic approaches, the research examines how the characters' dialogues reveal their psychological conditions, particularly in relation to past trauma. The study employs a qualitative method, focusing on observational analysis of the main characters' interactions and speech styles throughout the series. The results indicate that specific linguistic features, such as speech patterns, word choice, and intonation, provide insights into the characters' emotional states. For example, Connor's fragmented and aggressive speech patterns are interpreted as a defense mechanism, reflecting his unresolved trauma, while Sadia's structured and formal language reflects emotional suppression, as she seeks to maintain control in emotionally charged situations. These contrasting dialogue styles illustrate how trauma can shape both speech and identity development. By integrating psychoanalytic and linguistic frameworks, this study offers a unique perspective on character development within the horror genre. The findings reveal that shifts in language style throughout the narrative correspond to deeper psychological transformations, where trauma and internal conflict significantly influence how characters express themselves. This research contributes to the understanding of how language serves not only as a communication tool but also as a reflection of complex psychological and emotional realities.

**Keywords:** Trauma; Identity Formation; Psychoanalytic Analysis; Dialogue Analysis; Horror Genre; Linguistic

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Language,  
Technology,  
and Social Media

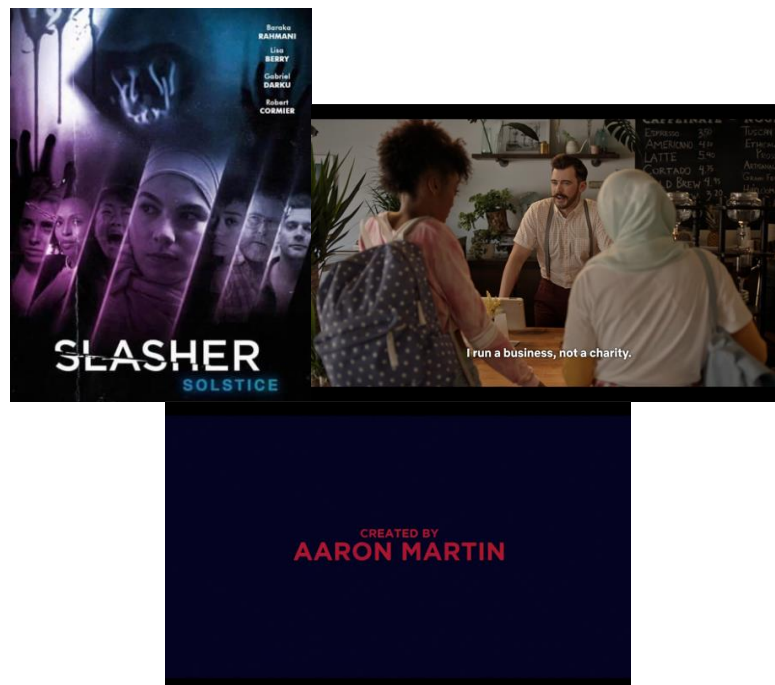
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## INTRODUCTION

Humans are inherently social creatures, relying on interactions with others to survive and achieve emotional fulfilment [1], [2], [3]. These relationships are not merely superficial; they shape a sense of community, individual identity, and influence behavior, beliefs, and experiences within society. Social exchanges are fundamental in the formation of human identity and behavior, guided by thoughts, emotions, and experiences that mediate interactions with the world. Language, as a primary tool for communication, plays a pivotal role in these social exchanges. It serves as a conduit for self-expression, interpersonal interaction, and the formation of social bonds, ultimately influencing how individuals perceive and relate to others [4], [5], [6].

Language, especially through the use of speech patterns and dialogue styles, offers more than a simple means of communication; it reveals the deeper layers of a character's thoughts and psyche [7], [8], [9]. The way a character speaks through their word choice, intonation, and manner of expression provides valuable insights into their emotional and psychological state. In the Netflix series *Slasher Solstice* (<https://www.netflix.com/watch/80988305>), language is a critical element used to portray trauma, desires, and identity [10]. The characters' speech not only serves as a narrative tool but also reflects the hidden depths of their psychological struggles. The series masterfully uses language to depict the inner turmoil and subconscious motivations driving the characters' actions, illustrating how trauma shapes both their speech and behavior.



**Figure 1.** Slasher Solstice Display

In the realm of psychoanalytic criticism, language is a powerful tool for revealing the subconscious elements of a character's identity and behavior. According to Martin Tarziah et al. [11], psychoanalytic criticism allows for the exploration of the hidden, unconscious mechanisms that govern human behavior, particularly in moments of emotional or psychological distress. In *Slasher Solstice*, this approach is particularly useful in analyzing how the characters' dialogues and speech patterns provide a window into their subconscious minds. The aggressive speech patterns of some characters, such as Connor Rijkers, reveal an internal conflict and emotional instability.

His erratic and disjointed language is a manifestation of the psychological defense mechanisms he employs to cope with the unresolved trauma of his past. His speech acts as an outward expression of the chaos within, giving viewers insight into his struggle with internal conflict.

On the other hand, other characters in *Slasher Solstice* express their trauma in more subdued and controlled ways. For instance, Sadia's measured and cautious language reflects a different type of psychological coping mechanism. Having experienced deep trauma since her childhood in Afghanistan, her speech is careful and deliberate, revealing a sense of guardedness that suggests she is constantly navigating her identity in relation to her traumatic past. Her dialogue is an outward reflection of the inner tension between her past experiences and her current efforts to maintain stability. This contrast between characters like Connor and Sadia highlights how language is used not only as a narrative device but also as a key to understanding the diverse psychological responses to trauma.

Previous studies have explored psychoanalytic or linguistic analysis in isolation, yet few have integrated these approaches to analyze characters in the horror genre, particularly in contemporary series like those on Netflix. Psychoanalytic criticism typically delves into the psychological underpinnings of character motivations, often focusing on how characters' subconscious desires and traumas influence their behavior [12], [13]. On the other hand, linguistic analysis focuses on the mechanics of language how word choice, syntax, and speech patterns reflect a speaker's identity and social positioning [14], [15]. However, *Slasher Solstice* provides a unique case study where both psychoanalytic and linguistic approaches can be combined to examine how trauma and identity are conveyed through dialogue. This research introduces a novel perspective by showing how the integration of psychoanalytic and linguistic frameworks can enrich the understanding of character development in the horror genre.

Through this dual approach, the study not only delves into the psychological aspects of trauma, identity, and desire but also investigates how language becomes a tool for the characters to express their inner realities. Characters in *Slasher Solstice* use language as both a shield and a weapon, reflecting their struggle to navigate their personal traumas while interacting with others in a socially complex environment. Aggressive speech, sarcasm, or careful word choice are more than mere linguistic styles they are symptomatic of the deeper psychological processes at work.

In conclusion, this research presents a novel integration of psychoanalytic and linguistic analysis, highlighting how trauma, desire, and identity are represented not only through character actions and plot but also through language. The dialogue in *Slasher Solstice* provides a unique insight into the characters' inner worlds, allowing for a richer, more nuanced understanding of how their psychological states influence their speech and interaction. This approach opens up new avenues for exploring character development in media, particularly in the context of contemporary horror, where language plays a critical role in conveying complex emotional and psychological landscapes.

## METHODS

This study employs a qualitative method to analyze trauma, desire, identity, as well as speech patterns and dialogue styles in the Netflix series *Slasher Solstice*. This method was chosen because it allows the researcher to delve into descriptive data derived from the characters' words and actions, and to explore how their speech patterns reflect underlying psychological conditions [16]. The study

also uses an observational approach to understand the characters' behavior in their natural context, which is the interaction within the series' narrative.

### Research Design

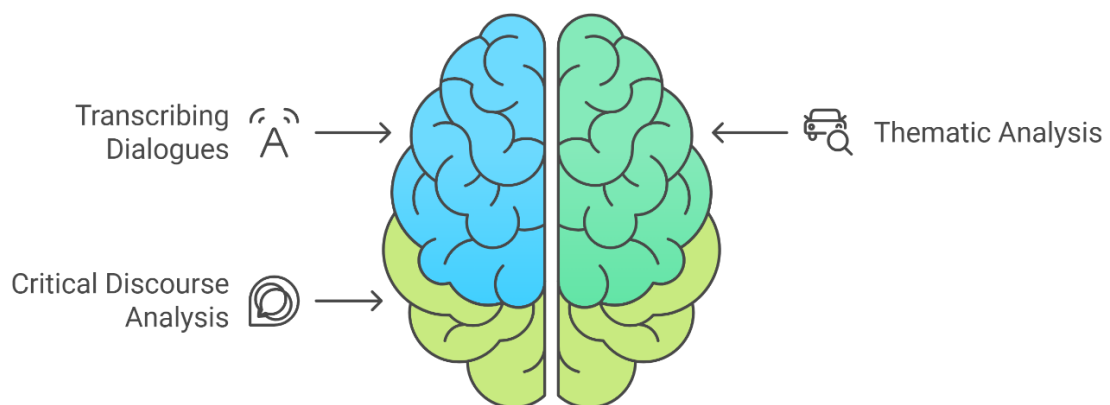
The study follows a qualitative observational design, where the researcher observes the dialogue, interactions, and character development in *Slasher Solstice*. It analyzes how the characters' trauma and desires are expressed not only through the storyline but also through their speech patterns, word choices, and dialogue styles used in specific situations. The research focuses on how the characters' psychological conditions, such as past trauma and internal conflicts, are reflected in the language they use (Freud, 1955).

### Data Sources

The primary data source for this study is the dialogue and interactions of characters in *Slasher Solstice*, specifically in the third season, which consists of eight episodes. Each episode is thoroughly analyzed to identify elements of trauma, desire, identity, and how the characters' speech patterns evolve as the story progresses. The secondary data includes articles and relevant literature on psychoanalysis, linguistics, and speech styles in media, enriching the analysis. This literature includes Freud's theories on the id, ego, and superego, as well as linguistic studies on informal, formal speech styles, and the use of sarcasm in character dialogue (Syafitri, 2023; Freud, 1961).

### Data Collection Techniques

Data collection is carried out by analyzing the dialogue and narrative in each episode. Each key dialogue involving characters such as Connor Rijkers, Jen Rijkers, Wyatt, and Sadia is transcribed and analyzed to understand how their trauma and desires influence their speech patterns and interactions. This process involves: 1) Transcribing character dialogues relevant to the research, particularly those demonstrating changes in speech patterns as a result of trauma or internal conflict; 2) Conducting thematic analysis to identify key themes related to trauma, desire, identity, and how characters communicate; 3) Applying critical discourse analysis to explore how psychological forces like trauma and defense mechanisms (e.g., denial, projection, and regression) manifest in the language used by the characters [17].



**Figure 2.** Overview of data collection through dialogue transcription and analysis

### Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data is analyzed using content analysis and discourse analysis approaches. The analysis focuses on:

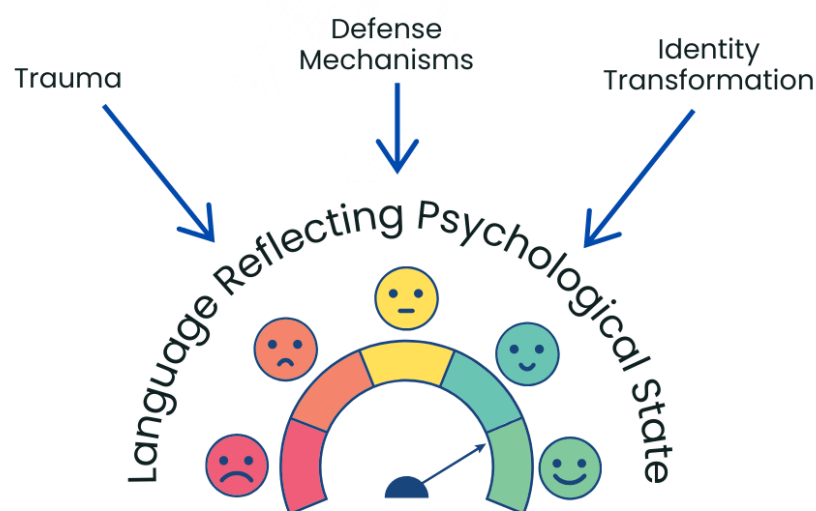
1. **Speech Patterns:** Identifying speech patterns of characters experiencing trauma, such as the use of short sentences, sarcasm, or word choices that reflect emotional instability [18].
2. **Dialogue Styles:** Analyzing how specific characters employ informal or formal dialogue styles depending on the situations they encounter. For example, Connor and Jen often use aggressive and sarcastic speech styles, which indicate their defense mechanisms for coping with trauma.
3. **Psychological Conditions:** Linking linguistic findings to the characters' psychological states, based on Freud's psychoanalytic theories of the id, ego, and superego. For instance, Connor's impulsive and uncontrolled behavior is analyzed as a manifestation of the dominance of the id in his psychology [19].

### Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, a triangulation strategy is adopted, where data from the characters' dialogues in the series are analyzed and compared with existing psychoanalytic theories and linguistic studies. Additionally, the researcher references various secondary sources to enrich interpretation and analysis.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

This study reveals that trauma, desire, and identity in the Netflix series *Slasher Solstice* are not only depicted through the development of the plot but are also deeply reflected through speech patterns, dialogue styles, and language use. The linguistic analysis applied identifies that word choice, intonation, and sentence length all indicate the psychological state of characters as they grapple with their past traumas. The following are the main findings of this research: 1) Character Speech Pattern As Reflections of Trauma; 2) Dialogue Styles as Representations of Psychological Defense Mechanisms; 3) Shifts in Language Style Over Narrative Progression; 4) Language as a Reflection of Changing Identity.



**Figure 3.** Analytical techniques linking speech patterns to trauma and identity



### *Character Speech Patterns as Reflections of Trauma*

Speech patterns are one of the key aspects that reveal the psychological state of characters in film or television narratives. In the context of trauma, the language used by characters often reflects how they struggle to cope with the emotional pain they have experienced. Trauma not only affects a person's physical or mental actions but also influences how they communicate. In the characters of *Slasher Solstice*, the speech patterns they employ significantly mirror the deep traumas they have endured, as well as their efforts to manage the accompanying pain.

#### 1. Connor Rijkers: Aggressive and Impulsive Speech Patterns

Connor Rijkers stands out as one of the most prominent characters in terms of using language as a reflection of trauma. Following the tragic death of his mother, Connor displays increasingly aggressive and impulsive speech patterns. In a psychoanalytic context, Connor can be seen as a character dominated by the "id," a component of Andrei A Puiu et al. [20] theory of personality structure that relates to primitive drives and impulsive desires.

Connor's explosive and disjointed speech reflects dissociation, where he experiences a disconnection from reality when speaking, especially when confronted with situations that trigger his traumatic memories. According to Stacey M. Boyer et al. [21] and Marco Cavicchioli [22] defense mechanism theory, dissociation is a form of defense where individuals separate thoughts, feelings, or experiences from their consciousness to avoid emotional pain. Connor frequently uses short, harsh sentences and often leaves his thoughts incomplete. This indicates that he is attempting to avoid fully confronting his trauma by expressing uncontrollable anger.

For example, when speaking to his sister Jen in one episode, his dialogue consists of fragmented phrases such as: *"They... were all wrong! We're the ones... we must."* This dialogue not only reflects Connor's inability to process the guilt and trauma of losing his mother but also shows how language becomes a defense mechanism for him. Instead of fully expressing his feelings, Connor channels his pain into anger and aggression, protecting himself from facing his deep emotional suffering.

#### 2. Jen Rijkers: Sarcasm as a Defense Mechanism

Meanwhile, Jen Rijkers, Connor's sister, expresses her trauma through sarcastic and often demeaning speech toward others. According to Freud's projection theory, Jen uses sarcasm as a way to project her own feelings onto others. In this case, Jen expresses her insecurities by belittling others, allowing her to avoid feeling vulnerable or weak. Sarcasm, as a form of defensive communication, enables Jen to avoid confronting her childhood trauma directly. It functions as a form of denial or rationalization, where she belittles others or makes jokes about situations that are actually painful. For instance, in a conversation between Jen and Wyatt, Jen cynically remarks, *"Oh, of course, because that's what always happens to innocent people, right? They just... get killed."* Though this sentence might appear straightforward, it is laden with sharp sarcasm. It reveals that Jen tries to rationalize her trauma with biting wit, while masking the genuine pain beneath.

M. Tarzian et al. [11] theory of rationalization, explains that Jen uses sarcasm to make her actions or the surrounding situation seem more emotionally acceptable, even though she is actually experiencing deep pain. In this way, Jen avoids truly confronting her trauma and prefers to express it through a form of communication that, while hurtful to others, is more tolerable for her.

### 3. Sadia: Structured Language and Emotional Control

On the other hand, the character Sadia expresses her trauma through more controlled speech patterns, using language that is more structured and formal. Sadia, who comes from a violent background in Afghanistan, exhibits traits of repression, in which she suppresses painful emotions and expresses them through more careful and measured dialogue [23]. Sadia speaks in longer and more logical sentences, striving to maintain emotional control in high-pressure situations.

In psychoanalysis, repression is a defense mechanism where individuals suppress painful feelings or memories to prevent them from surfacing into consciousness [24], [25]. Sadia, through her regulated speech style, attempts to control her emotions and avoid the resurfacing of her past trauma. This is evident in her calculated dialogues, where she tries to keep conversations focused on facts or information rather than emotions. For example, when discussing the loss of her family, she says: *"They are all... gone, but we must keep going. There are more important things to think about."* This sentence reflects deep emotional repression, where she avoids fully addressing her pain and chooses to focus on practical matters instead.

Among these three characters, it is evident that their speech patterns reflect the ways in which they cope with the trauma they have endured. In the context of Freud's theory and psychological defense mechanisms, Connor's aggressive speech, Jen's sarcasm, and Sadia's formal control are all forms of psychological adaptation to their trauma. Language becomes a reflection of their emotional struggles, affecting not only their actions but also how they communicate with the world around them.

### *Dialogue Styles as Representations of Psychological Defense Mechanisms*

In psychoanalytic theory, defense mechanisms are unconscious strategies employed by individuals to protect their ego from anxiety or internal conflicts that cause emotional distress. Sigmund Freud, Maria Grazia Di Giuseppe and J. Christopher Perry [26], the originator of this theory, identified various defense mechanisms, including denial, projection, dissociation, and repression, which function to maintain psychological equilibrium when an individual faces trauma or stress. In the context of the *Slasher Solstice* series, the characters' dialogue styles clearly reflect these defense mechanisms, serving as windows into their psychological states.

#### 1. Denial and Connor Rijkers' Speech Style

The character Connor Rijkers demonstrates a dialogue style that reveals denial as his primary defense mechanism. Denial is the process by which individuals unconsciously refuse to accept painful or threatening realities. In his dialogues, Connor frequently exhibits fragmented sentences or avoids discussing his deeper feelings. This is a form of denial regarding the trauma he experienced after his mother's death. For instance, when speaking about his loss, he uses phrases like *"I'm fine"* or *"It doesn't matter,"* despite his actions indicating otherwise. His speech reflects how he refuses to acknowledge the profound impact his mother's death has had on him.

According to M. Isabel García-Rodríguez et al. [27], denial allows individuals to temporarily avoid facing a reality that is too painful to confront. Connor's denial-filled



dialogue seems to serve as an attempt to maintain the illusion of control over himself, even though he is, in truth, unable to cope with the pain he is experiencing. This rejection of reality is reflected in his increasingly fragmented conversations when faced with situations that trigger his past trauma.

## 2. Projection and Jen Rijkers' Sarcasm

The character Jen Rijkers consistently uses projection as a defense mechanism, which is expressed through her sarcastic and mocking speech style. Projection is the mechanism where individuals project their own negative feelings or impulses onto others, attributing those negative qualities to others [28], [29]. Jen frequently blames others for her problems, using dark humor and sarcasm to avoid directly confronting her own pain or guilt.

A concrete example of Jen's projection is when she repeatedly mocks those around her, particularly those she holds responsible for her suffering, like Wyatt or other residents of Clayborne. In lines such as, *"Oh, you think you're better? Look who's talking!"*, Jen unconsciously projects her own feelings of helplessness and anxiety onto others. Her sarcasm and mocking tone reveal her inability to confront her own weaknesses, and through projection, she tries to distance herself from guilt and shame.

Paul J. Eslinger et al. [30] theory of projection suggests that this mechanism is often used as a tool to preserve a positive self-image when faced with threatening negative emotions. Jen's sarcasm is a verbal manifestation of this projection mechanism, where she masks her insecurities by criticizing others.

## 3. Dissociation and Connor's Dialogue

Dissociation is a defense mechanism where an individual separates painful thoughts, feelings, or memories from their conscious awareness. In the case of Connor Rijkers, his fragmented and inconsistent speech is an indication of dissociation. When his past trauma resurfaces, especially in high-pressure situations, Connor tends to escape reality by leaving sentences unfinished or abruptly shifting the conversation to another topic. This is evident in dialogues such as, *"I don't know... don't care. Just forget it,"* where he clearly tries to avoid discussing emotionally uncomfortable topics.

Michael J Diamond [31] explained that dissociation occurs when the subconscious mind cannot handle a reality that is too painful, separating certain aspects from consciousness as a form of protection. In Connor, this dissociation is reflected in his scattered and disordered dialogue whenever he is confronted with something that triggers his past trauma. By using fragmented dialogue, he verbally illustrates the emotional distance he creates between himself and the threatening reality.

## 4. Repression in Sadia's Dialogue

The character Sadia utilizes repression as a defense mechanism in her speech, often marked by long and structured sentences. Repression is the process by which unwanted thoughts or emotions are pushed into the unconscious, preventing the individual from consciously acknowledging them [32], [33], [34]. In her dialogues, Sadia rarely shows strong emotions, despite having experienced significant trauma. She tends to speak carefully and rationally, reflecting an effort to suppress the fear or anxiety she actually feels.

For instance, when discussing her past in Afghanistan, Sadia uses phrases like, *"That was a long time ago, and everything is fine now."* This calm speech pattern reflects her deliberate attempt to suppress traumatic memories and maintain an image of someone in

emotional control. Repression, as Anna Oldershaw et al. [35] described it, allows individuals to shield themselves from unbearable emotional pain by suppressing their awareness of such emotions.

The dialogue styles in *Slasher Solstice* serve as tangible representations of the characters' psychological defense mechanisms. Their speech patterns, sarcasm, and dialogue structures reveal how they handle trauma and internal conflicts. By connecting these dialogue styles to Freud's defense mechanism theories, we gain deeper insight into how these characters protect their egos from psychological threats, using language as a tool to maintain their emotional balance.

### *Shifts in Language Style Over Narrative Progression*

In the series *Slasher Solstice*, the shift in the characters' language styles becomes increasingly apparent as the narrative progresses and the trauma they endure intensifies. This analysis highlights how the psychological conditions of the characters, particularly their trauma and inner conflicts, are reflected in their evolving speech patterns and dialogue styles throughout the storyline. Through the lens of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory and linguistic theories on communication patterns, this section delves deeper into the transformation of the characters' language styles in relation to their psychological development.

#### 1. Language Style Shifts: From Calmness to Chaos

At the beginning of the narrative, the language styles of characters like Connor Rijkers and Jen Rijkers are still controlled, despite being filled with anger and frustration. Their sentences are longer, with logical and coherent structures, though laced with sarcasm and suppressed anger. However, as the story unfolds, and new traumas emerge, accompanied by rising emotional conflicts, their language style transforms into shorter, fragmented, and at times, incoherent speech.

According to Simon Thomas van Baal et al. [36], this response can be explained by the dominance of the id, where individuals experiencing trauma tend to give in to impulsive urges that are uncontrolled by the ego. The shorter, anger-filled speech reflects the loss of rational control typically exercised by the ego, as the pressure of trauma forces individuals to revert to the primal impulses of the id. Fragmented and unfinished sentences can also be seen as a form of dissociation [37], in which characters like Connor struggle to integrate their emotions with their language effectively. They attempt to avoid emotional pain by leaving sentences incomplete or diverting the conversation.

For instance, at the beginning of the story, Connor still uses coherent sentences when speaking with Jen or other characters, though there is an underlying tone of anger. However, after his mother's death, his language style shifts drastically. His dialogues become more fragmented, indicating increased emotional instability. This can be interpreted as a manifestation of psychoanalytic defense mechanisms such as denial or projection [38], [39], where the character denies his pain by avoiding deep discussions or redirects it into verbal aggression.

#### 2. Sarcasm as a Defense Mechanism

Sarcasm, frequently used by characters like Jen Rijkers, is one of the most prominent defense mechanisms seen in her dialogue. In linguistic analysis, sarcasm is identified as a communication strategy employed to conceal true emotions behind humor or mockery,

creating emotional distance between the speaker and anxiety-inducing situations [40], [41], [42].

According to Sayid Arshad Al Hindwan and Nur Rosita [42], sarcasm can be viewed as a form of projection, where characters project their fears, anxieties, or helplessness onto others in the form of insults or derision. Jen, feeling powerless after her mother's death, uses sarcasm to regulate her emotions and convey a sense of control, even though internally she is filled with fear and insecurity. Sarcasm also serves as a form of rationalization, where Jen attempts to provide rational justification for her behavior, which is actually driven by fear and trauma [43].

In linguistics, sarcasm is often associated with informal speech and indirect language. Sarcasm creates emotional distance between the speaker and the listener, which in Jen's case is used to avoid discussing the trauma she is truly experiencing. Her sarcasm intensifies as the story progresses, indicating that she becomes increasingly unable to face her emotions in a healthier way, opting instead to verbally attack others to conceal her own pain.

### 3. Psychological Conditions and Their Influence on Language

The psychological conditions of the characters, particularly trauma, affect not only their actions but also the language styles they adopt. As the narrative unfolds, Sadia, one of the more emotionally stable characters, also displays shifts in her speech patterns. Initially, Sadia's language is calm, formal, and calculated, reflecting her effort to remain in control despite being surrounded by trauma.

However, during moments when Sadia faces direct threats or violence, her language becomes shorter and more defensive. According to linguistic theory, this shift can be seen as a manifestation of hypervigilance [44], in which traumatized individuals become more alert to their surroundings and tend to use more direct and defensive language as a means of self-protection. In the context of Freud's psychoanalytic theory, this can be interpreted as repression, where Sadia suppresses her traumatic memories from the past but remains subconsciously influenced by them, as seen in her more defensive and closed-off language style.

### 4. Language as a Reflection of Changing Identity

Language also serves as a reflection of the characters' evolving identities as the narrative progresses. According to social identity theory, an individual's identity is strongly influenced by their relationships with others and how they navigate social groups [45], [46], [47]. In *Slasher Solstice*, the identities of Connor and Jen as victims shift as they confront their traumas, and this transformation is reflected in the language they use. They transition from softer, more vulnerable language at the beginning of the story to harsher, more violent language, mirroring their shift in identity from victims to perpetrators of violence. This transformation in language style demonstrates how trauma and internal conflict not only shape their actions but also influence how they express themselves verbally. The shift from coherent to fragmented speech, and from relatively calm language to sarcastic and aggressive tones, highlights how trauma has a direct impact on how the characters communicate and process the world around them.

Through this analysis, it becomes evident that changes in language style in *Slasher Solstice* are closely tied to the development of the characters' psychological conditions. By employing both

psychoanalytic and linguistic approaches, it is clear that language is not just a tool for communication but also a reflection of trauma, internal conflict, and evolving identities.

### *Language as a Reflection of Changing Identity*

In the context of the *Slasher Solstice* series, the characters' identities undergo drastic transformations as they face mounting psychological pressures. One of the primary indicators of this change is the language used by the characters, particularly in their dialogues and interactions with others. Language, in this sense, serves as a medium to depict the transformation of characters from initially vulnerable individuals into increasingly hardened and brutal personas. These shifts in speech patterns align with the psychological changes they experience. According to psychoanalytic theory, a person's identity is shaped through the complex interaction of three main components: the id, ego, and superego [11], [48], [49], [50]. The id is the most basic part of personality, representing instinctual drives that seek immediate gratification without regard for consequences. The ego functions to mediate between the desires of the id and the realities of life, while the superego represents the moral codes and social standards internalized by an individual.

In *Slasher Solstice*, characters like Connor Rijkers and Jen Rijkers exhibit significant identity shifts, which are reflected in the language they use. At the beginning of the series, they are portrayed as victims of past trauma having witnessed the tragic death of their mother before their eyes. In the early stages, their language remains emotional but not extreme. However, as the story progresses and they transition into roles as perpetrators of violence, their language shifts dramatically. They begin using shorter, sharper, and harsher sentences, indicating that they are increasingly dominated by their id, driven by instinctual urges for revenge and a desire for violence, with little regard for moral or social consequences.

This transformation aligns with object relations theory, which explains how childhood experiences, especially traumatic ones, shape individuals' relational patterns later in life [51], [52], [53]. Jen and Connor grew up in a dysfunctional family, where the death of their mother left a deep psychological scar. As their identities evolve throughout the series, they adopt the Druid persona to commit murders. This new identity is reflected not only in their actions but also in the language they use. They begin to speak in more sadistic and hateful ways, revealing that they have internalized their trauma and transformed it into a desire for vengeance. Jen, for example, increasingly employs sarcastic and dismissive language in her conversations. This sarcasm can be seen as a defense mechanism known as displacement, where she expresses her anger toward others to avoid confronting her inner emotional pain (Freud, 1955). Jen, who initially tried to restrain her emotions, now uses language to exhibit moral indifference and the brutality that dominates her new identity. By adopting the Druid persona, Jen has let go of her ego and superego, allowing the id to take full control of her behavior and speech.

Connor, on the other hand, demonstrates more impulsive and aggressive speech, often using short, rage-filled sentences. This reflects his increasingly uncontrollable instinctual urges as the story progresses. Connor no longer uses language that suggests regret or doubt but instead succumbs to his desire for violence and anger, driven by his trauma. This shift shows that his identity has moved from a passive victim to someone actively seeking revenge. In psychoanalytic terms, this indicates that the id has taken a dominant role in his personality structure, with little to no mediation from the ego or superego.

According to Marina Vulović and Filip Ejodus [54], humans form their identities through language and the “order of the symbolic”. Lacan argues that language mirrors deeper psychological structures, and changes in speech patterns indicate shifts in an individual's identity. In the case of Jen and Connor, their increasingly harsh and hateful language shows that they have entered a phase where their trauma dominates their identities. Language becomes not just a tool for communication but also a means of shaping and reflecting their evolving identities.

Furthermore, theory of “self-presentation” explains how individuals present themselves to others through language and actions [55], [56]. In Jen and Connor’s case, they use language to reinforce their new identities as killers. They strive to project strength and dominance through their speech, essentially attempting to maintain control over an unstable situation. Through these shifts in language style, they try to solidify their new identities both in the eyes of others and within themselves. In contrast, Sadia, who has a traumatic background from Afghanistan, attempts to maintain her identity by using more formal and measured language. This reflects her continued effort to preserve control over her identity, despite the ongoing presence of her past trauma. In extreme situations, however, her speech becomes shorter and more fragmented, suggesting dissociation when she feels overwhelmed. Nonetheless, she strives to maintain her emotional integrity, unlike Jen and Connor, who have surrendered to their ids.

Thus, language serves as an essential medium for depicting the characters’ shifting identities in *Slasher Solstice*. Through the lens of psychoanalytic theory and identity theory, we can see how changes in speech patterns reflect profound alterations in the characters’ personalities and psychological structures, especially as they grapple with trauma and extreme psychological pressure.

## Discussion

In this study, the main findings reveal that the trauma, desires, and identities of the characters in the Netflix series *Slasher: Solstice* are not only reflected through the plot but also through the speech patterns and dialogue styles employed by the characters. Based on the applied linguistic analysis, it was found that word choice, intonation, and sentence length are closely linked to the psychological states of the characters as they struggle with their past traumas.

One of the characters, Connor Rijkers, exhibits aggressive and impulsive speech patterns. This aligns with Freud's theory of personality structure, where the id dominates Connor's behavior, driven by primitive and impulsive desires without the balanced control of the ego and superego [49]. His disjointed and emotionally charged speech reflects a form of dissociation, a defense mechanism where individuals separate painful thoughts and feelings from their consciousness to avoid emotional distress [33], [38], [57]. This demonstrates how Connor attempts to evade direct confrontation with his trauma by expressing uncontrollable outbursts of anger. Connor’s speech pattern is also supported by previous studies indicating that trauma often manifests through incoherent and emotional language [10], [21], [58], [59].

On the other hand, Jen Rijkers, Connor’s sister, uses sarcasm as a form of projection defense mechanism. Projection, is a mechanism where individuals project their negative feelings onto others to avoid confronting their own internal pain [60], [61]. Jen's sarcasm serves as a way to rationalize her pain and deflect her emotions through irony and mockery directed at others. Linguistic studies further reinforce that sarcasm is often employed as a communication strategy to create emotional distance between the speaker and an anxiety-inducing situation [62], [63].



Additionally, the character Sadia expresses her trauma through structured and controlled speech patterns, reflecting emotional repression [64], [65], [66]. Although she speaks logically, her language indicates an effort to avoid recalling her past trauma. This aligns with theory of repression, where individuals suppress painful emotions or memories to prevent them from surfacing into consciousness. Other linguistic research also suggests that structured and formal speech patterns are often employed by individuals experiencing trauma to maintain emotional control [13], [67], [68].

This study introduces a novel perspective on character analysis in the horror genre by combining psychoanalytic and linguistic approaches simultaneously. Previously, psychoanalytic and linguistic analyses were often conducted separately, with psychoanalytic analysis focusing on character motivations and trauma without considering how language reflects their psychological state, while linguistic analysis examined technical aspects of language such as word choice and syntax [9], [69], [70], [71]. This study introduces an integrative approach that demonstrates how trauma and character identity are revealed not only through actions and plot but also through dialogue and speech patterns. Another innovative aspect lies in the use of psychoanalytic theory to analyze language in the context of trauma in contemporary media, specifically within the horror genre. By examining *Slasher: Solstice* through this dual approach, the research provides new insights into how modern horror characters use language not only as a narrative tool but also as a reflection of the complex psychological dynamics driving their actions. The findings highlight that language is not merely a communication tool but also a medium for expressing repressed internal realities and psychological turmoil experienced by the characters. Thus, this research contributes to enriching the literature on fictional character studies in modern media by offering a deeper perspective on how trauma and identity can be analyzed through language.

## CONCLUSION

This research reveals that language serves not only as a communication tool but also as a reflection of the trauma and internal conflicts experienced by the characters. Through the analysis of speech patterns, dialogue styles, and language use, the study demonstrates how trauma influences the emotional and psychological expression of the characters. In *Slasher: Solstice*, characters use language as a defense mechanism—whether through aggression, sarcasm, or measured emotional control. The findings highlight that changes in language style are significant indicators of shifts in character identity and psychological conditions. The dual approach, combining psychoanalytic and linguistic analysis, provides new insights into understanding how characters in the horror genre cope with trauma and express their identities through language.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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